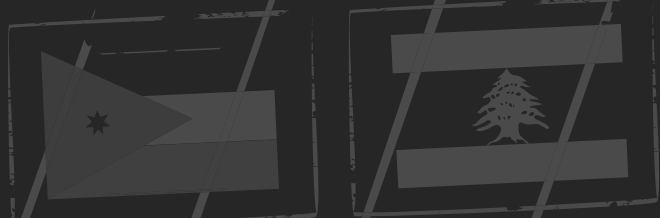


2020/21



SIREN
■ ASSOCIATES

Annual Report

siren Associates © 2020 - 2021



2020/21

This Annual Report covers
the financial year April
2020 - March 2021.

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Cover Image: Volunteer recovers clock
stopped at the precise time of the Beirut
blast. Photograph posted by Lodie Naimeh.

SIREN
■ ASSOCIATES

*Annual
Report*

Siren Associates © 2020 - 2021

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01 *Labout Siren*

What we do

CEO's introduction

What we do

We drive innovation at the leading edge of public sector transformation, helping our partners reimagine the possible in the service of safe, just and free societies.

Our multidisciplinary teams combine cutting-edge research and analysis with tech-infused change management services to improve people's safety, access to justice and freedom to participate fully in the life of society.

Our motivation is simple: to help lay the foundations for societies to prosper and for people to realise their full potential.

We adopt a social contract based-approach to building prosperous societies, working with our partners to promote responsive and accountable public institutions, political and economic inclusion, and robust and harmonious relationships between state and society and between different social groups within those societies.

Our teams operate at the intersections of peacebuilding, development and humanitarian action to build the capacity of states to meet the expectations of their people, and for different social groups to articulate their expectations of the state and agree upon common goals.

CEO's introduction

In a world characterised by volatile and, some would argue, unpredictable change, how should we plan for the future and respond to emerging threats and opportunities?

In grappling with this question over the past year at Siren, we've taken time to reflect on who we are, where we want to go, and how we can best serve the communities and institutions we partner with.

Our updated mission statement is a better reflection of how we've grown over the past few years, with a portfolio that now spans governance, justice and security sector transformation. Our newly launched Strategic Framework, meanwhile, outlines a clear trajectory to realise this mission.



In addition to an almost threefold increase in the number of Siren staff between 2019 and 2021, huge shifts in our operating environment accelerated this organisational refocusing. The COVID-19 pandemic has sharpened inequalities and societal fractures worldwide. In fragile states, the social and economic impact of the crisis has amplified instability and is likely to further erode already limited trust in public institutions.

Certain state and non-state actors have meanwhile attempted to silence critical voices exposing corruption and public



We are creating digital solutions that open new avenues for dialogue, and generate insights for our partners about why people do the things they do.

mismanagement. These attempts to shrink civic space, whether through violence or legislation, threaten to undermine social cohesion while social media is being used to simultaneously accelerate the spread of divisive content and misinformation.

Siren has responded to these challenges over the past year by supporting our partners to become more transparent, inclusive in decision-making and responsive to people's needs. We have placed a particular emphasis on working toward broad-based participatory governance, with the full inclusion of women and youth. Promoting the development of meaningful partnerships between state, civil society and different social groups has equally been a priority in our work building safer communities and more accountable policymaking processes.

To harness the transformative power of data analytics and digitisation in public sector reform, Siren joined forces with tech company, CME SAL¹. The result is [Siren Analytics](#).


Through this sister company, we are creating digital solutions that open new avenues for dialogue, and generate insights for our partners about why people do the things they do. We then support our partners in using these insights to reimagine their business practices in the pursuit of long-term societal goals.

In this annual report, we are pleased to share some of our achievements over the past year, and perhaps more interestingly, the insights and lessons we've learned along the way. We're eager to spark discussion about these findings and the topics we deal with, and to seek out additional partners and staff who share our values and commitment to making a difference. Please do get in touch if you feel that's you.

Jonathan McIvor

Jonathan McIvor MBE
CEO & Chair of Board of Directors
May 2021

¹ CME is a multinational company providing digital services for Fortune 1000 companies. They have broken down barriers between technologies and sectors, providing end-to-end, hardware-to-software engineering solutions across a range of industries.



key project **02** *metrics*

Community safety and social cohesion in Jordan

Public sector governance and accountability in Lebanon

Support to Lebanon's Internal Security Forces

Community safety and social cohesion in Jordan

Representative
Amman survey of

1106

People



Response
to online
SGBV

Perceptions
of Safety



National survey
of community
police men and
women

15

Syrian and Jordanian youth
trained on community engagement
campaigns with the police



Domestic
Violence

Cyber
Bullying



Qualitative study of youth
perceptions of security



Qualitative and quantitative
research on cybercrime
in Amman, Mafrqa and Irbid



18

Focus Group
Discussions on
online reporting
of SGBV



32

Key Informant
Interviews with
community
leaders



600

families received
food parcels



Community
Police
received
100,000
disposable gloves



10,000
reusable masks

Public sector governance and accountability in Lebanon

Launch of Lebanon's first e-governance platform

IMPACT

+6,300 users to-date

COVID-19

>340,000 cases tracked

Platform adoption for:



COVID19-mobility permits
>19.3M pageviews



vaccination campaign
>16.6M pageviews

>270 media articles since March '20



>1,850,000 vulnerable individuals

230 government buildings to assess damage after Beirut blast

159 civil servants as pilot human resources survey

>1,110 municipalities and towns

MAPPING THROUGH IMPACT

Rural and local development in



Launch of Open Data Website

>129,000 views of open data page to-date

6 one-on-one workshops with municipalities and mukhtars around using IMPACT



Support to
Central Inspection

Facilitating collaboration

Inter-ministerial

Inter-municipal



11 ministries



>1,500 municipalities



>1,300 mukhtars

Communications



>1.7M impressions Jan – Jun '21

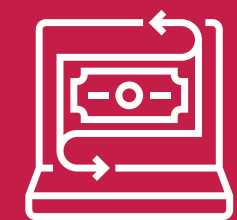


2014% followers on Twitter



Organisational development

Set up Analysis, Planning and Coordination Unit



Launch of Fenix, a platform to digitise internal transactions

Support to Lebanon's Internal Security Forces

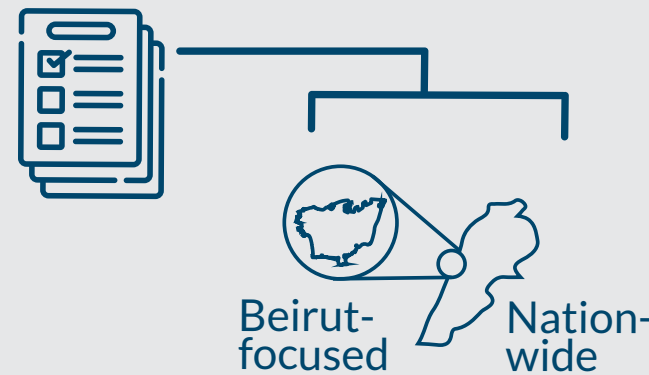
6

Long-form research reports



2

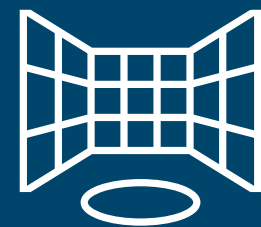
surveys on perceptions of safety and trust in the ISF



>5,000 respondents



Towards Intelligence-led Policing



National HQ Command and Control Centre established



Digital link to 22 regional operation rooms



Set up Analysis, Planning and Coordination Unit at Interior Ministry



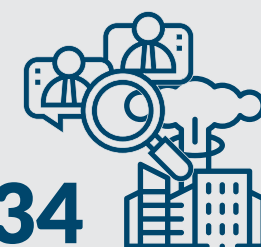
Internal Conflict Sensitivity Awareness

5 work-shops

7 Focus group discussions

with 15 staff

Post-blast Community Engagement



34 community consultations held in blast-affected areas



>1000 guidance SOPs distributed to ISF personnel in Beirut

Human rights compliant digital checklists produced for inspecting and reporting on:



Detention facilities



Medical Centres



Patrolling



Public order events



Check points



Investigations of torture and trafficking

Support to ISF's PR Department contributed to progress on Facebook:

350,000 more engaged users in 20/21

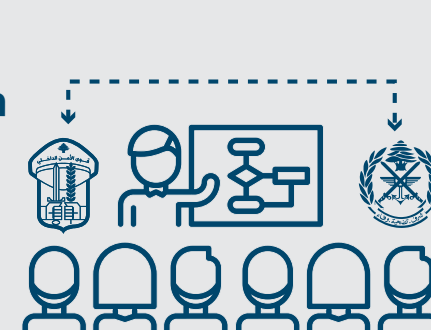


47% ↑ in comments

36% ↑ in reactions

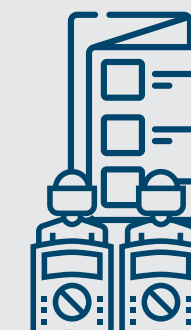
Public Order Optimisation

Interagency workshop between ISF and LAF



>1120

ISF staff trained on new public order process



ISF Public Order Manual of Guidance adopted

ISF Use of Force guidelines adopted



Siren leads the way in countering online SGBV

Placing diversity and difference at the core of public sector transformation

The role of digital governance in crisis management

Considerations on security sector transformation during times of crisis

Identifying and capturing change in dynamic contexts

03 *thematic reflections*

New research positions Siren as leading voice on online SGBV in Jordan

As the world looks tentatively toward a life with fewer coronavirus lockdowns and mobility restrictions, a pandemic of online gender-based violence sharpened by the virus remains critically under-addressed.

According to a global [survey](#) carried out last year by the Web Foundation, 87% of young women and girls surveyed thought online abuse, including threatening messages, sexual harassment and the sharing of private images without consent, was getting worse.

In Jordan, interpersonal cybercrime and online Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) is not only under-addressed, it's also critically under-researched. Since 2020, Siren has been plugging this gap, strengthening the evidence base on which to design interventions seeking to address barriers to reporting and seeking help.

From the outset, the full and meaningful participation of local communities through the research cycle was built into this work, from research design, through to data collection, analysis and use.

Online bullying and blackmail came up in our previous work with youth in Ramtha in 2018, who told us they were keen to engage with the

police on this issue. Cybercrime came further to the fore in 2020. Our [April survey](#) of public perceptions of community safety in Amman revealed that over a third of Jordanians and Syrians were concerned or very concerned about cybercrime.

With online bullying, blackmail and sexual exploitation committed generally behind closed doors, it was particularly alarming that 40%

of respondents said they would encourage a female family member to do nothing after suffering from violence at home. When it came to reporting being a victim of theft or street violence, however, over 90% said they would recommend going to the police.

Driven by these findings to dig deeper into the issue, we bid for and secured funding to support the police and civil society protection



New research positions Siren as leading voice on online SGBV in Jordan (cont'd)

actors deal with online SGBV. This included carrying out a wider research project looking into the reasons for and impact of the forms of cybercrime we were discovering.

Over the course of 12 focus group discussions with people vulnerable to this form of crime, around half the female participants had a personal story they were willing to share with us about their experience at the sharp end of online-SGBV, and the difficulty reporting it to authorities, friends or family members.

We partnered with six community-based organisations in north Amman and north Jordan to push this work forward - all of whom identified a need to enhance their advocacy and outreach skills, and for strengthened systems to coordinate effectively with other local actors and measure impact.

A large component of our cybercrime work in Jordan in 2021 will therefore focus on building the capability of our partners in these areas. We will also support 24 influential and trusted community pioneers to organise their own cybercrime awareness initiatives. This includes offering training and discussion sessions where beneficial, in addition to resources to hold events. Crucially, this approach relies on the existing knowledge and networks of these individuals to build a shared understanding

of the risks, prevention and response options regarding cybercrime.

Having worked on community safety with the Jordanian national police since 2013, Siren was well placed to help the Public Security Directorate translate our research on interpersonal cybercrime and online SGBV into a set of actionable recommendations.

This included holding three workshops involving the police and local police-community coordination councils structured around the results of our perceptions survey and qualitative research. From there, working closely with the community police, a high profile community engagement initiative was developed that had a focus on dealing with cybercrime. This is no small feat, as the PSD's Conscious Youth initiative is the first of its kind that includes both Syrian and Jordanian youth leaders to reach out to communities to share safety messages and gain a better understanding of community concerns.

As of May 2021, the PSD with Siren's support had trained 15 young people in north Amman on how to plan and implement joint community engagement campaigns with the police. Over 2021, they will work together to develop two initiatives on the themes of domestic violence and cyber bullying. There is also an appetite

Since 2020, Siren has been strengthening the evidence base on which to design interventions addressing barriers to reporting and seeking help.

New research positions Siren as leading voice on online SGBV in Jordan (cont'd)

for Conscious Youth to be launched nationally, and a further two iterations are ready to be implemented in other parts of the country.

The urgency of nurturing this spirit is great. We found in our research into youth perceptions of their personal, family and community security that young Syrians and Jordanians sometimes fear dealing with the police. These fears are sometimes based on negative interactions they, their friends or family previously experienced. Others fear community backlash should a woman or Syrian refugee report a crime to the police.

These findings drive home the vital role that specialised police departments, particularly the Cybercrime Unit and Community Police, have in preventing and tackling crimes committed offline and online. Much can be done to support the PSD to activate its awareness raising and prevention role in this regard. In our December 2020 nationwide training needs assessment of the Community Police, we found that community engagement skills – particularly dealing with people from different nationalities – ranked among the most pressing skills to learn.

We're standing steadfast in our support to Jordanian communities in this area, with plans in 2021 to help PSD Community Police Trainers incorporate these findings in their training curriculum. Our training team will also be mentoring field community police officers and local police-community coordination councils on how to engage people from different backgrounds on online SGBV and other issues.

Aside from working with the police and local community-based organisations to improve access to support around online-SGBV, we plan to develop a much more comprehensive understanding of the norms, institutions and policies surrounding women accessing security and justice services. This additional research will help create even better targeted and impactful interventions.

This will be at the core of our research in 2021, and we are already working closely with those directly affected by these issues to map and better understand the actors, dynamics and interrelations that impact women's opportunities to prevent or stop crimes, and seek support and justice afterwards.



هدف الورشة
والسبيل المتوقعة

Siren places diversity and difference at the core of public sector transformation

The resurgence and worldwide resonance of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 encouraged renewed [reflection](#) on the inequalities of the global aid system. Yet, alongside growing debate about how to make aid better reflect the preferences of the people it's meant to serve, donor priorities turned inward. Funding was increasingly [allocated](#) to pursue short term national strategic interests over core development objectives.

So, how can aid budgets be used to drive inclusive development while the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic tighten donor purse strings and donor appetite for unilateralism grows? For public sector reform implementers, one answer lies in adopting an approach that is open to alternative voices, and in prioritising initiatives that enhance oversight and accountability of the powerful.

Opening aid up to alternative voices

Internationally-funded public sector reform projects must be locally owned and led if the real needs of communities are to be met. This means seeing local communities as active changemakers rather than passive recipients of aid. It also means creating opportunities to devolve decision-making so that local communities can shape their own destinies.

This starts by valuing different ways of thinking, foregrounding local knowledge and understanding that marginalised communities are best positioned to describe their own issues.

In our research into online sexual and gender based violence in Jordan, for example, we partnered with *Tadamon*, a local group with strong standing in the community, to explore this issue and facilitate conversations about SGBV with groups most vulnerable to this crime.

Our understanding of complex gender dynamics developed significantly as a result. We

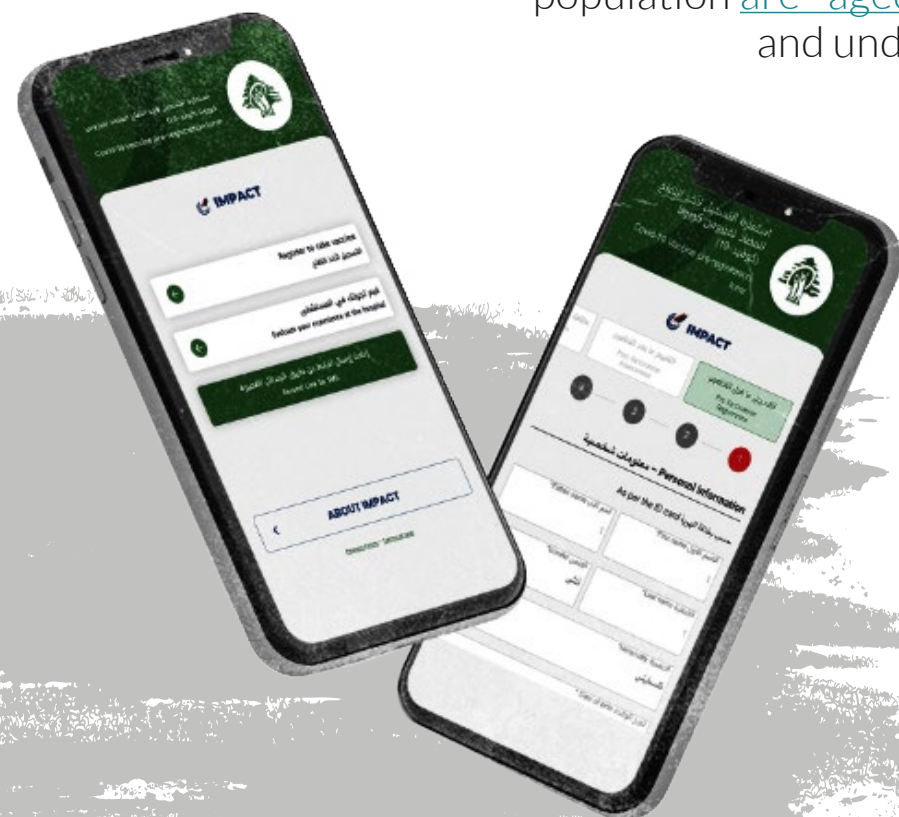
Solutions that are designed collaboratively in response to community issues stand on stronger ground for success than those designed from above.

Siren places diversity and difference at the core of public sector transformation (cont'd)

learnt that – as expected – men go to police stations and report crimes much more than women. However, the reasons for this are complex. While Jordanian men are less likely to encourage women to go to a police station, Syrian women are far less hesitant about doing so.

Solutions that are designed collaboratively in response to community issues further stand on stronger ground for success than those designed from above.

Like most initiatives in security sector reform, our projects in Jordan have thus far dealt with youth safety and security from perspectives informed by a government security actor, the Public Security Directorate. Youth voices have not been as prominent as they should have been in our understanding of their lived realities and perceptions of safety, despite the fact that 70% of the Jordanian population [are aged](#) 30 and under.



This year, however, we are launching a project supporting 12 youth researchers growing up in areas where state presence is low and crime rates are high. The project will empower these young people to explore what inhibits security, safety and wellbeing among their peers, and design youth-prioritised responses to youth-identified problems. Siren will then support the researchers in designing interventions addressing the identified issues.

Oversight and accountability

Using aid to enhance people's ability to oversee and monitor the equitable distribution of resources and services is another safeguard to ensure that aid continues to drive locally identified development objectives.

Our work in Lebanon is illustrative here. [The Donor Coordination Platform](#) (DCP) established under Lebanon's Council of Ministers is a good example of how aid can be deployed creatively to enhance oversight and accountability, and enable inclusive development.

The DCP was created in the wake of the Beirut explosion in 2020 to log and track aid and in-kind donations to fund the city's immediate recovery and longer-term reconstruction. To date, \$292 million in assistance has been logged on the

IMPACT's National Covid-19 Vaccination Campaign, Lebanon, 2021.

What's clear in 2021 is that the cost of not being transparent is huge. Unaccountable, opaque state institutions will be seen as un-reformable and targeted by divestment campaigns.

platform, which displays data regarding the type, amount, source and destination of donations.

The Interior Ministry, with Siren's support, also formed an Analysis, Planning and Coordination Unit to ensure that resources given to Lebanon by donors are used efficiently and effectively to address ministerial priorities. A separate web-based donor coordination platform was created to make all relevant donor and project information easily accessible, allowing Unit staff to oversee ministry-related funds and projects, avoid duplication and resource wastage, and

Siren places diversity and difference at the core of public sector transformation (cont'd)

effectively lead the dialogue around funding. The platform facilitated the creation of a digital donor database that currently maps more than 267 donor projects. The Unit is also now regularly producing high-quality analytical reports to inform decision making at the ministerial level.

The key here is transparency. The Council of Ministers' interactive, open access web portal allows public data on donations to be inspected at a high level of granularity. This offers the public a chance to scrutinise how and where resources and services are allocated. Access to such data is a pre-requisite for evidence-based decision-making and effective coordination between donors, the state and project implementers. The web platform at the Interior Ministry also helps to build a sustainable capability within the ministry to provide effective and transparent donor coordination.

What's clear in 2021 is that the cost of not being transparent is huge. In the US, the Black Lives Matter movement demonstrated that unaccountable, opaque state institutions will be seen as unreformable and targeted by divestment campaigns. Lebanese politicians who thought they were immune from these campaigns swallowed a bitter pill in 2020, with the international community rallying in the wake of the Beirut explosion to bypass corrupt state bodies and channel aid into alternative funding mechanisms.

They're right to do so in the short term. Beirut's rehabilitation and the attainment of human security needs a people- not state-centred approach. And the funding [framework](#) announced by the World Bank, United Nations and European Union offers civil society a good deal of say in how long-term reconstruction

aid is prioritised and spent. However, if aid is to tackle the power imbalances embedded within the global development industry, it is critical that state institutions are supported and reformed.

Aid must be used to create the systems and processes that enable transparent leadership, and provide civil servants with the right tools for effective governance. Only then will state institutions be empowered to play the oversight and control roles originally envisaged for them. Only then will they be able take charge of a participatory, long-term strategic planning approach that can drive development regardless of donor vagaries.

BLM protest by the M4BL (Movement for Black Lives) Coalition calling for defunding the police in Washington, DC.



Siren champions role of digital governance in crisis management in Lebanon

If for decades commentators have described Lebanon as a fragile state, 2020 was the year many Lebanese questioned whether it was time to admit it had failed.

A financial implosion, the mass destruction resulting from the August 2020 Beirut Port blast, and protracted political paralysis, made it seem clear that Lebanon's kleptocratic ruling elite had driven the country into the abyss.

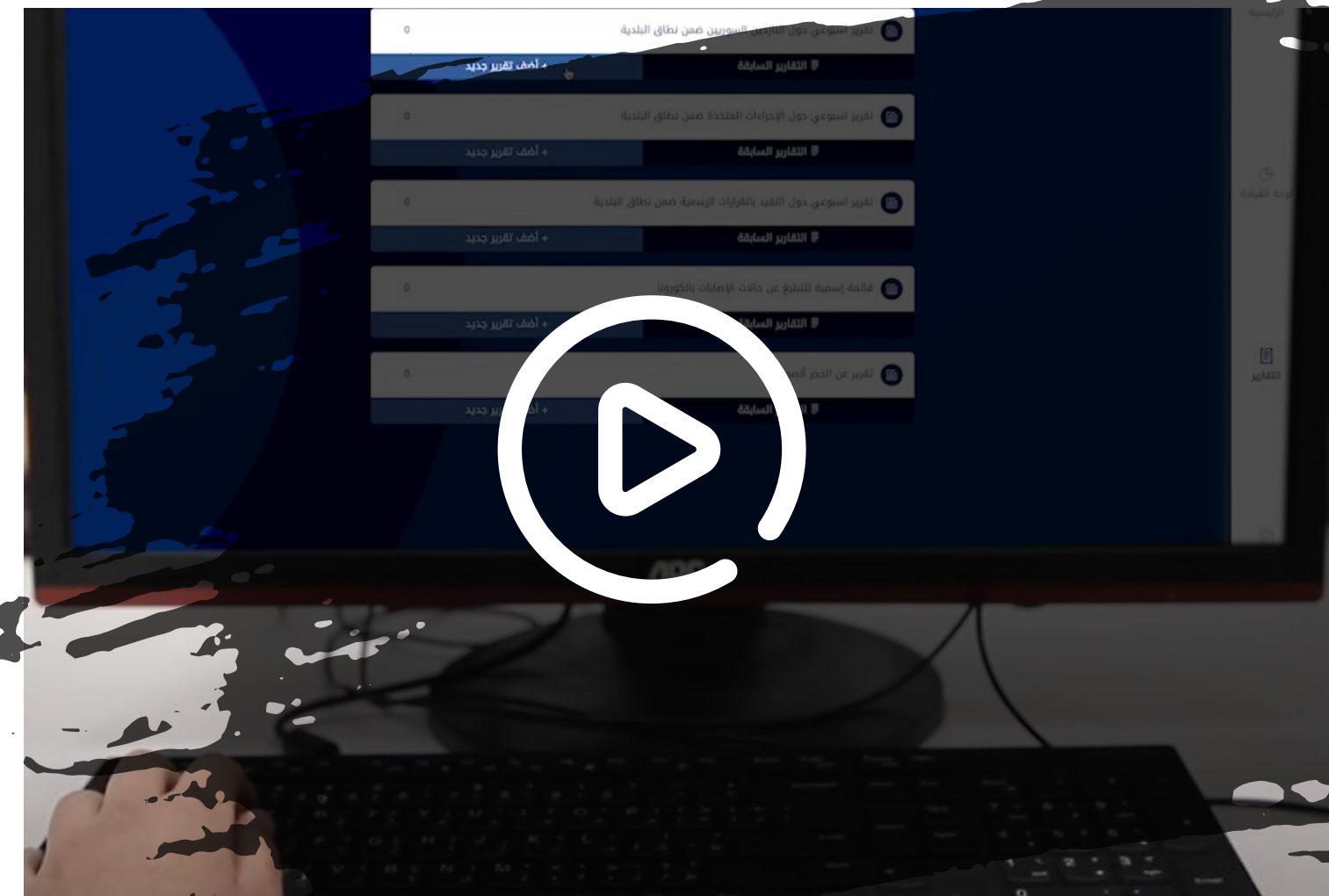
But for a country whose ruling elite have made a business of carving fiefdoms from the state apparatus, data analytics and digitisation provided a glimmer of hope that the battle to reclaim the state and eradicate business-as-usual mismanagement was still on.

As the COVID-19 crisis spilled into just about every sector, a unique opportunity emerged to bring Lebanon's siloed state institutions closer together. If a digital tool could be created to enable transparent, joined-up and information-driven decision-making, a first step toward rebuilding trust between citizens and the state might just be achieved.

As Lebanon's foremost oversight body, Central Inspection (CI) was the natural entity to own such a tool. And so, with Siren's support, CI set about creating the Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment, Coordination and Tracking ([IMPACT](#)), Lebanon's first e-governance platform.

Since IMPACT's creation in early 2020, public and private sector actors have routinely engaged with each other to map people's needs, and develop and coordinate appropriate responses to the confluence of crises engulfing Lebanon. In doing so, CI has created a space for public institutions and administrations to move beyond the politics of conflict so prevalent in society, and collaborate to better define their institutional roles and citizen's needs.

IMPACT repeatedly demonstrated its effectiveness in managing and adapting to crises over the course of Lebanon's ongoing coronavirus response.



Siren champions role of digital governance in crisis management in Lebanon (cont'd)

At the time of writing, at least 34 Red Cross units, 60 laboratories and 434 social workers were using the platform daily to trace new COVID-19 cases. During lockdowns, local authorities relied on IMPACT to issue mobility permits, so far pushing out around 13 million of them. With the availability of vaccines lightening prospects for a lasting reopening, the platform enabled more than 900,000 people to register their interest in receiving a vaccine in under a month, knowing that it would inform a targeted and needs-prioritised vaccination campaign. Registered companies meanwhile did their bit to show compliance with safety regulations as Lebanon attempted at return to some semblance of normality, uploading the results of tens of thousands of staff PCR tests as the country reopened.

Globally, it quickly became evident how the pandemic reinforced existing inequalities and hit marginalised groups hardest. Lebanon was no exception, but IMPACT enabled tangible steps to be taken to bring these people into the fold.

The Social Affairs Ministry notably used

IMPACT to engage local officials and mukhtars in creating a national database of vulnerable households. Discussions are ongoing with the World Bank around refining and verifying the 468,000 entries in this database to expand Lebanon's national poverty-targeted social assistance program. Importantly, stateless people and women heads of households are able to register for aid or the vaccine through the platform – breaking from the usual mould of exclusionary registration criteria.

This kind of joined-up working is a major breakthrough in a country whose sectarian or consociational power-sharing system is known to cause endless deadlock and delay. Despite higher-level political paralysis, a mutually reinforcing relationship grew between IMPACT and CI to enable decision-making on critical issues. As an oversight body, CI helped enforce the usage of IMPACT, especially among generally reluctant users in the public sector. IMPACT, meanwhile, gave CI higher visibility and strengthened its standing as a champion of change in the public sector.

Siren champions role of digital governance in crisis management in Lebanon (cont'd)

IMPACT thus became a key tool in CI's audit arsenal, making up for understaffing by improving inspectors' auditing capacities. It also moved the discussion to a technical level, where rational solutions are able to emerge. In a self-serving and hasty effort to signal commitment to reform, the ruling elite inadvertently reinforced this shift by appointing competent individuals to the public administration. And so, while regime politicians focused on sectarian politicking and polemic, pockets of reform-minded civil servants were able to get things done and at least try to cater to people's growing needs while everything else appeared to be falling apart.

This fledgling link between the public and private sectors has been a long time coming and is largely attributable to the inclusion of meaningful transparency measures in IMPACT. Through its [open data web portal](#), people can check, track and question the public sector's decision making and allocation of much needed resources.

Upholding citizens' right to access information and facilitating such oversight will be a key driver behind Lebanon eventually charting of a course toward inclusive, sustainable development. Leveraging Lebanon's vast technological expertise to bring about this form public sector transformation is what [Siren Analytics](#) is about. We will continue to support CI and the Lebanese people to engage in constructive, two-way communication that will pull Lebanon back to its feet.

In the coming year, this means expanding our support to CI to help it extend its reach into other critical areas, specifically finance, while also improving coordination mechanisms between CI and other public sector oversight actors, like the legislature. It also means funding and running internship opportunities through the [Youth 4 Governance](#) initiative, offering ambitious youth the chance to gain hands-on experience of working with reform champions within the public administration.

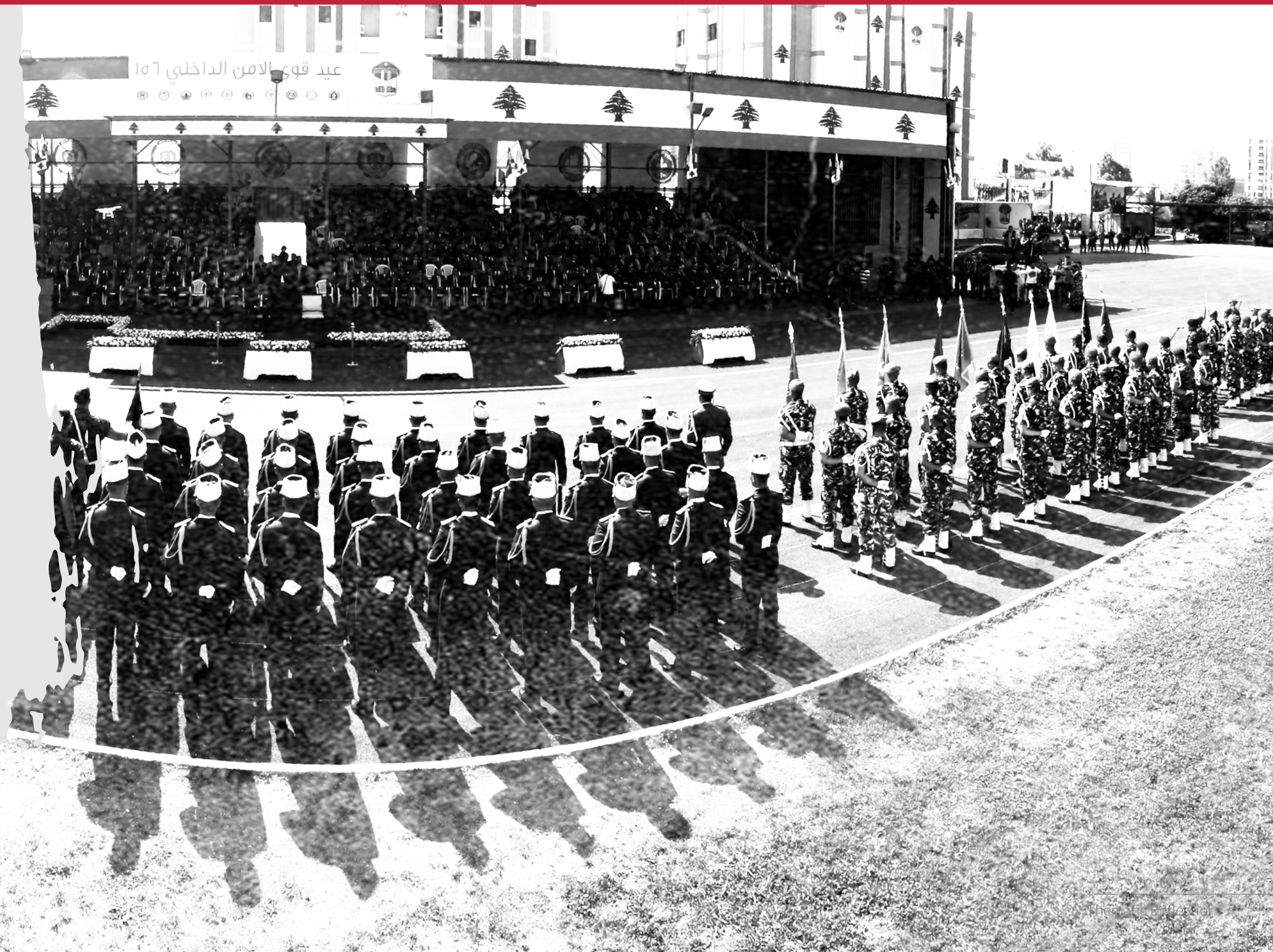
Photo displaying Central Inspection archives and data storage prior to digitisation.

Upholding citizens' right to access information and facilitating oversight will be a key driver behind Lebanon eventually charting of a course toward inclusive, sustainable development.

The reality of security sector transformation during crises: considerations for donors and implementers

Since October 2019, Lebanon has been shaken by a series of interwoven crises that have seen the country's security forces tasked with maintaining stability and order while the status quo is furiously rejected.

A political solution is ultimately needed to address the corruption and mismanagement behind Lebanon's financial collapse and the catastrophic Beirut explosion. But what, if anything, can and should be done to support the security sector navigate this increasingly complex environment? Supporting security agencies runs the risk of being seen to contribute to upholding an unacceptable status quo, yet abandonment at this stage could simply contribute to furthering chaos.



The reality of security sector transformation during crises: considerations for donors and implementers (cont'd)

In such circumstances, donors and practitioners alike need to take a thoughtful, measured and context-specific approach. They must recognise the inherent limitations of their work but equally identify and pursue entry points for initiatives that could help galvanise positive change. Drawing on our work over the past year, a number of key lessons are evident that can help inform not only security sector reform approaches in Lebanon, but also other contexts characterised by similar periods of instability and economic crisis.

Adapt

Adaptive programming is often talked about, yet rarely actioned. Important at the best of times, it is essential during crises. Implementers must have the capacity to identify and act on new opportunities, as well as the humility to recognise when things aren't working, and the courage to let them go. Donors need to enable or, better yet, demand this from partners. They must create flexible monitoring and evaluation structures that account for this agility while remaining robust enough to measure effectiveness.

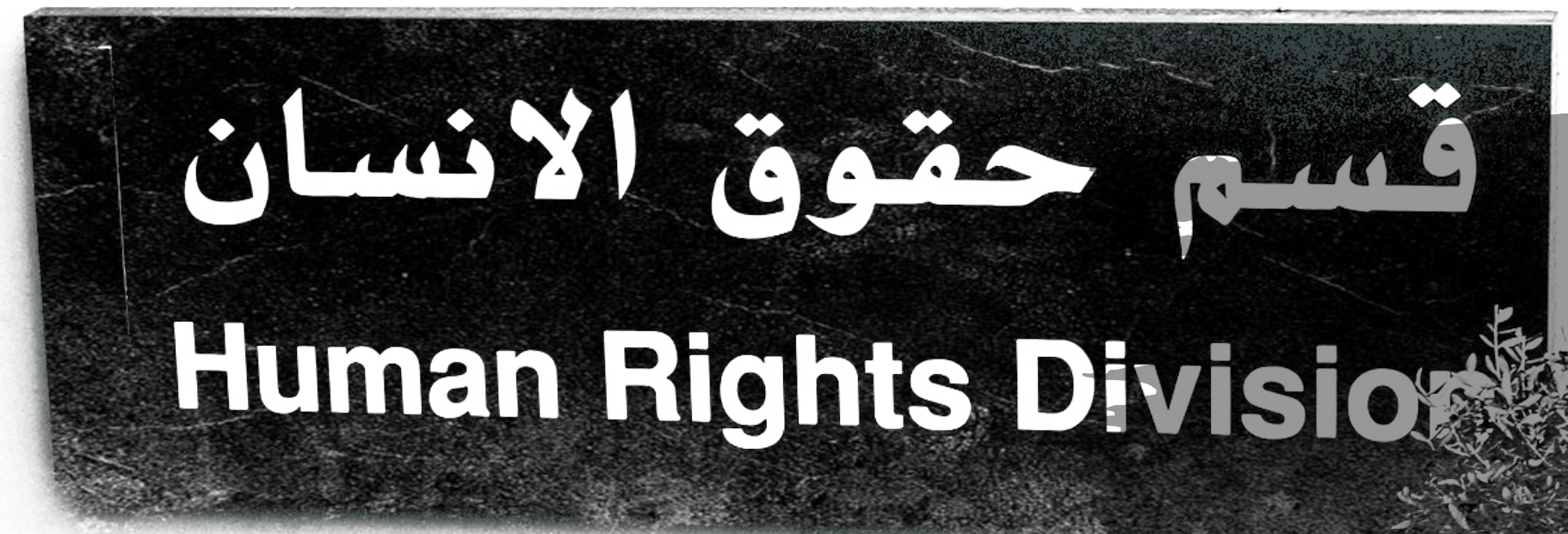
Lebanon's October 2019 uprising meant major disruptions to our programme's workplan with the Internal Security Forces (ISF), and brought

new risks in terms of human rights and police-civilian relations. Yet, it also provided a practical opportunity to tackle issues around the use of force during public order events. It opened an entry point to think about broader police accountability mechanisms, as the lack of such mechanisms had been brought into stark relief and was no longer something that could be ignored.

Rather than stick to activities in our workplan that were either made irrelevant by the current context or difficult to deliver given the new demands placed on the police, we instead reoriented efforts to respond to these new needs. Although improving human rights protections and accountability remained our broad objectives, the pathways to achieving them were reimagined to fit the context. In this process, new opportunities presented themselves to push forward on reforms elsewhere.

Responding directly to the massive public order demands on the police, we worked collaboratively with the ISF to develop new guidelines in relation to the use of force, train frontline staff on these guidelines, and create

processes to monitor their implementation. In the long-neglected justice sector, the political crisis empowered a more reformist leadership within the Bar Associations, the Justice Ministry and the judiciary. The coronavirus crisis, meanwhile, [highlighted](#) the issue of prison overcrowding and the risks to detainees

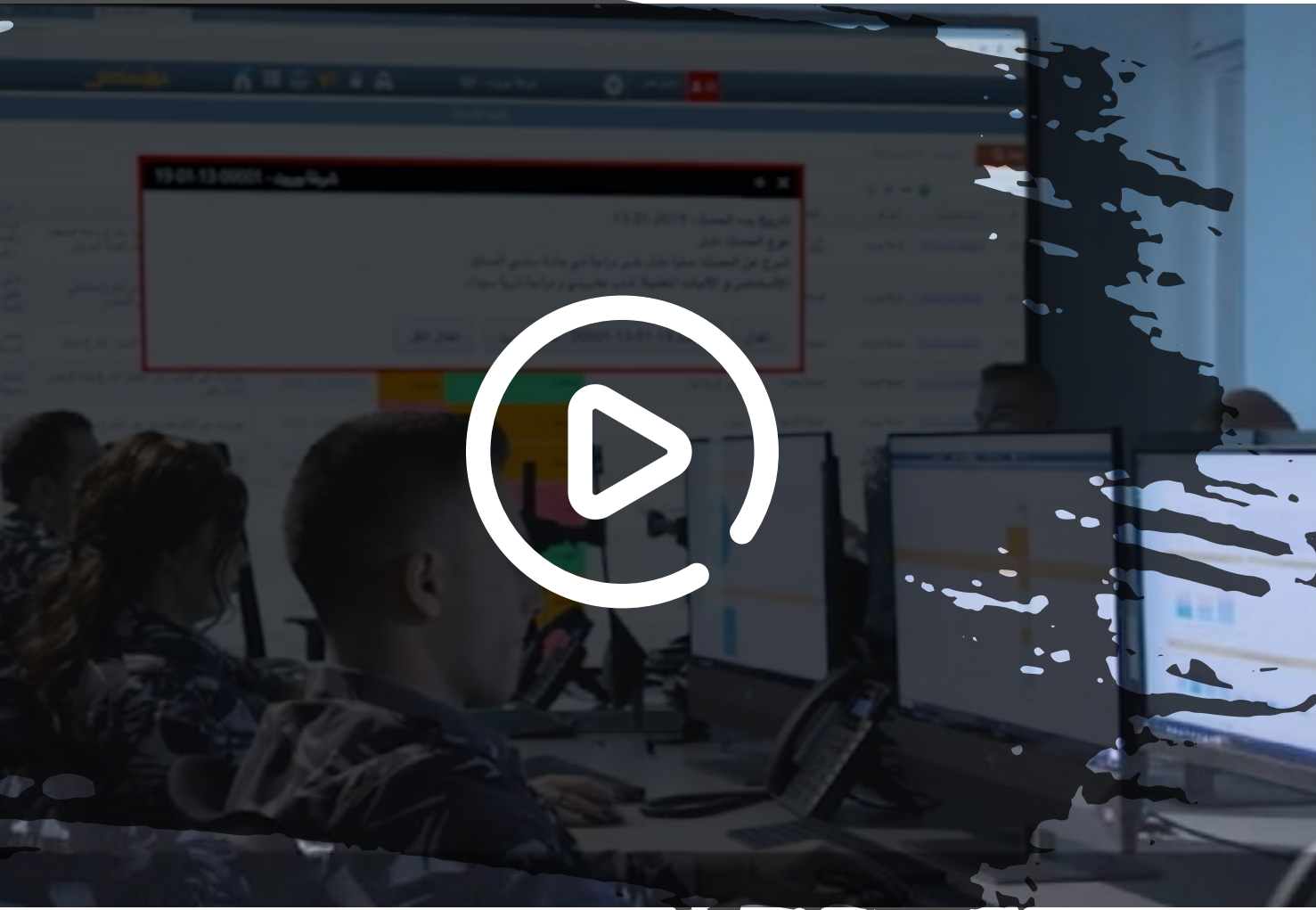


worldwide. Considerable action has since been taken to address issues relating to detention overcrowding and due process rights – action long called for by Siren and others. This action includes expediting the release of low-risk prisoners and reforming key articles of the Code of Criminal Procedure².

As has been [noted](#) elsewhere, it is *during* such times of crisis that rigid systems can begin to

² Siren (2018), 'Framework for Reducing Overcrowding in Lebanon: Eight Critical Pathways.' Available upon request.

The reality of security sector transformation during crises: considerations for donors and implementers (cont'd)



Our support to the ISF to improve command and control has increasingly focused on streamlining decision-making to improve responsiveness to community needs.

become more malleable to change. The question is now whether donors will be agile and attuned enough to be able to reorient resources to support the long-term sustainability and potential knock-on effects of these pockets of reform.

Think and act strategically

Lebanon's crises unsurprisingly served as a major distraction from long-term planning efforts. Yet, it is precisely during times of crisis that clarity about what you are trying to achieve, how you are going to achieve it

and how best to mobilise the support and resources to do so becomes critical. Ultimately, strategy must be understood not in terms of a final state or document, but as a set of capabilities, structures, and processes that culminate in a shared culture of strategic thinking.

Siren has long supported the development of strategic planning capabilities in the ISF, including facilitating the development of the ISF's inaugural five-year strategic plan, [launched](#) in 2018. More recently, Siren has supported the Interior Ministry to set up an

Analysis, Planning and Coordination Team (APC): an internal unit that is fully resourced by ministry personnel and dedicated to the task of ensuring a coordinated, strategic and information-driven approach to ministerial planning and action.

Yet, attempting the development of a ministerial wide strategic plan is unrealistic in this time of flux and political uncertainty. Instead, we've focused on mentoring the team in the use of practical methodologies, ranging from programme management, to risk analysis,

The reality of security sector transformation during crises: considerations for donors and implementers (cont'd)

data visualisation and strategic communications. Alongside this, we've helped them apply these new methods to the emergent issues that the ministry has been faced with.

Critically, we advocated for this new unit to be integrated into the existing ministry structure so that the insights and thinking derived from these new capabilities drive decision-making. To ensure the longevity of the unit in a country marred by political flux, the outgoing Interior Minister in November 2020 approved a document that formally named the individuals appointed to it. Establishing and empowering this technical unit is a critical step toward improving civilian governance of the security sector - an often [neglected](#) element of SSR programming.

The key take away here is that capacity building is necessary but not sufficient; the much harder task of clarifying and streamlining institutional processes and structures is essential so that units with existing strategic planning capabilities are placed close to decision makers.

Our support to the ISF to improve command and control has increasingly focused on unlocking these barriers to improve responsiveness

to community needs. Streamlining both upward and downward decision-making can help ensure the rights decisions are being made at the right level. It is also a pre-condition for what are often misunderstood as “softer” elements of programming, such as the dissemination and enforcement of new human rights policies. Ultimately, security agencies' [ability to respond](#) to community needs is dependent on them functioning coherently and efficiently, and being able to plan and work under the leadership of civilian emergency management entities.

Be clear on red lines

For better or for worse, security forces necessarily find themselves in a position of [defending](#) the status quo. This often puts them in a highly contentious space that demands of those engaged in SSR a recognition of the inherent human rights risks in their work.

Politicised, highly charged and violent protests are often flash points for human rights violations, and such infractions continue to occur regularly within so-called western policing



The reality of security sector transformation during crises: considerations for donors and implementers (cont'd)

agencies. A clear articulation of these risks and their mitigation measures is therefore essential. So too is realism about the long-term, cyclical nature of the work.

But these should be accompanied by expectations of accountability, and programming should take seriously the need to strengthen the various accountability mechanisms available. This means looking not just at internal accountability but also at judicial proceedings, parliamentary oversight and the watchdog role of civil society.

This last element has had particular resonance in Lebanon, with local and international advocacy playing a critical role in increasing demands for police accountability. We aimed to integrate this within our activities, drawing heavily from recent reports and investigations conducted by local and international human rights organisations in our trainings,

debriefings and workshops with the ISF. We also made a concerted effort to translate the findings of these reports into tangible actions for various internal stakeholders. It's an imperfect and challenging process, but facilitating the bridging of these two worlds is a key gap that we attempt to fill.

Yet, there are also clear instances where lines need to be drawn. The presence of the Parliamentary Police and its implication in successive human rights abuses stands out as a clear example. Although its units wear state-sanctioned security uniforms, evidence suggests that they fall outside of formal command structures, report directly to the Parliament Speaker and are not bound by the same regulations, codes of conduct, training or standards as the ISF or Lebanese Armed Forces.

As [noted](#) in our September 2020 report on the State of Emergency in Lebanon, such flagrant

disregard for basic international standards requires a political, not technical response. A failure of the international community to take a clear stance here will simply feed into cynical perceptions of SSR in Lebanon.

It's the economy, stupid

Failing to account for and address the ways in which Lebanon's economic crisis is impacting security agencies' operational effectiveness will mean leaving one of the key drivers of institutional malaise unaddressed.

Siren has continually highlighted human resource management issues, which account for a significant portion of an agency's budget, as a

Politicised, highly charged and violent protests are often flash points for human rights violations, and such infractions continue to occur regularly within so-called western policing agencies. A clear articulation of these risks and mitigation measures is therefore essential, and should be accompanied by expectations of accountability.

The reality of security sector transformation during crises: considerations for donors and implementers (cont'd)

major point of concern. They are similarly highlighted within the ISF Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

This issue has become acute with the onset of the economic crisis, with public sector hiring freezes leading to a shrinking resource pool, and the Lebanese Lira's severe devaluation destroying the real value of salaries. These material considerations have tangible impacts on the morale and priorities of officers who may be the intended partners of SSR initiatives.

Yet, mobilising donors to support structural, back-office reforms is challenging. Meanwhile, addressing these issues as implementers requires a skillset that is focused more on change management, process re-engineering, digitisation and public finance than traditional models of police training and equipping.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing global recession, this is not an issue unique to Lebanon. Figuring out how these elements are integrated into SSR programming, making sure that sufficient funding is made available to support these much more structural reforms, and ensuring coherence between projects initiated by donors across the whole security sector is therefore crucial to a more nuanced, long-term and systemic approach to transforming security agencies.

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Failing to account for and address the ways in which Lebanon's economic crisis is impacting security agencies' operational effectiveness will mean leaving one of the key drivers of institutional malaise unaddressed.

Cars queue in front of gas stations in Lebanon amid worsening fuel crisis, June 2021.



Beyond the results framework: considerations for identifying and capturing change in dynamic contexts

The compounding crises that Lebanon has endured since 2019 have necessitated that Siren's Security Sector Reform (SSR) programming respond to evolving, and often critical, national needs. But while it's important to be open to new entry points that can help galvanise positive change, being too flexible risks loss of direction and unclear objectives, while a rigid focus on planned activities risks rendering programming irrelevant or unimplementable.

Being agile but objective-focused helps chart a course away from these dangers. There's a great deal of scope to enhance a security agency's professionalism, responsiveness and resilience by working within the paradigm of an adapted, SSR-appropriate, [7-S model](#) that focuses on their style (informal culture), skills, systems, structures, staff, strategy and shared values. However, because common monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practice operates largely within a paradigm of assumed linear change, it often fails to capture the change achieved by an agile approach that adapts its targeting of these areas to the evolving context.

Core tools such as [results frameworks](#) reflect this emphasis on predominantly linear causality and are commonly required as part of any development project. Results frameworks provide a clear, logical breakdown of project activity in a step-by-step fashion, highlighting hierarchical levels of change, and accompanying indicators that are intended to demonstrate this change. However, while results frameworks are intended to be living documents that are edited and updated over the project life cycle, they are inherently too reified to accurately and comprehensively capture non-linear, complex and sometimes "soft" – but nonetheless critical – change.

This became increasingly evident as the Lebanese crises, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, intensified over 2020 and into 2021. Several times, we found it necessary to strategically reprioritise the scope of our work with the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and adapt the results framework to the new context. This collaborative process involving the Research, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (RMEL) team and project delivery teams created

needed dialogue around a realistic articulation of progress, success and how to quantify and qualify various levels of change throughout the project. The outcome was a more robust results framework that was somewhat better at reflecting the wealth and breadth of activities that made up the project, as well as the challenges. But despite these benefits, it was ultimately a cumbersome process whose rigid, linear approach to reflecting change remained incongruent with the manner in which change actually occurs on our project.

In this instance, the results framework enabled the donor to provide regular reporting to its domestic taxpayers. However, the real substance of the change achieved would have been lost had we not also adopted other change measurement techniques. These include using a "theory of change" – a tool that permits a more elaborate capturing of non-linear change and incorporates the assumptions upon which project activity is designed and delivered. We also carried out regular collaborative "[action-learning cycles](#) of observation, reflection, dialogue and implementation" that were

Beyond the results framework: considerations for identifying and capturing change in dynamic contexts (cont'd)

accompanied by regular, targeted and participatory evaluations. This “mixing of traditions” provides adequate data to ensure on-going programming remains high quality, on track and compliant, even though the intricacies of the types, value and causation of change are not always captured by default.

Our communication, tracking and reporting patterns equally changed with the shift toward working from home. Here, the theory of change proved useful in stimulating guided discussions on where our assumptions underpinning the project had changed, or could no longer be upheld. This further alerted us when and where we needed to adapt activity in line with the vast changes in context that emerged from October 2019 onward.

Were it not for these discussions, activities and related changes that could be deemed “soft” would not have been captured in a useful way. An appreciation of the hours

of informal mentorship and support to key change champions within the ISF; the time and effort dedicated to relationship management across the institution; and the value of co-developing and establishing a seemingly “basic” process in an ISF department that then catalyses much broader and significant behavioural change would have otherwise been lost. It would have also been too easy to underplay the importance of the trust built between various individuals in the ISF, or across departments, or between Siren’s project team and individual members of the police service. Building this trust is no insignificant achievement, given that SSR activity necessarily deals in sensitive data through its proximity to security agencies and other public bodies.

Elsewhere, this clash between traditional planning and agility became clear as we were forced to modify or abandon some of our data collection plans or methodologies over emerging

security, risk and ethical considerations. Rapid degenerations in the security context or changes in the operating environment meant that some of these decisions around data-collection had to be made last-minute. The resulting analysis or data points therefore often sat awkwardly within the rigid confines of the results framework.

Sadly, there is no quick-fix that can solve this epistemological mismatch in delivery, reporting and evaluation modalities to easily meet the various data needs of different SSR project stakeholders. However, the experience of guiding our SSR project with the ISF through an extremely turbulent year has shown that this gap can be bridged fairly well by adopting, in parallel, a results framework, a theory of change and regular action-learning cycles. When combined with regular participatory evaluations, this approach can move monitoring and evaluation beyond an exercise of capturing bite-size, largely quantitative chunks of data, to one that captures change in its full spectrum.

Building trust with members of security agencies is no insignificant achievement, given that SSR activity necessarily deals in sensitive data through its proximity to security agencies and other public bodies.





Aiming for Impact

Supporting Society

Interview with Sarah
Zahreddine

Siren Staff in Figures

04 Living our values

Aiming for impact: strategy in an uncertain world

Operating in unpredictable settings where our partners' needs evolve with rapidly shifting political, economic and security conditions is challenging. Remaining accountable to donors who fund us to deliver against specific objectives is also key. But maintaining internal clarity about who we are, what we're trying to achieve and the way go about making change, is equally fundamental.

In 2021, we refocused Siren's overall mission to ensure it shines as a guiding star, keeping staff throughout the organisation tightly aligned in their understanding of our direction of travel. In developing Siren's new strategy, we also rejected the model of a static "strategic plan" that outlines step-by-step activities, choosing instead to adopt a "strategic framework" that clearly articulates Siren's priorities while still allowing implementation to be flexible.

Siren's Strategic Framework 2021 builds on our mission, values and core philosophy to articulate four key goals, which will help steer our decision-making, ensuring we remain adaptive, yet resilient in the face of uncertainty. And by focusing on objectives over activities, we have

left room for staff to launch initiatives that creatively pursue our strategy throughout the organisation – be it in the way we write reports, to the way our offices are designed. A number of initiatives have already been launched under the strategy, and new ones will come into play as capacity becomes available and needs emerge.



*Aiming for impact:
strategy in an uncertain world (cont'd)*



The first goal, to live our values, is the foundation of our strategy. This reflects that, along with our core philosophy of client-centredness, values are at the heart of pursuing our mission - and never merely lip service. Recognising that there is sometimes a gap between where we are and where we'd like to be, we have launched trainings on client-centred consulting and are integrating our values explicitly in the way we collaborate and support our staff. For example, our RMEL team in Jordan has created a shared team contract around the values, articulating what it means for the team to put each value into action.

We are also improving the way Siren functions, so that we become fit for purpose to do what no one else can. Siren has expanded tremendously over the past two years in terms of staff and our scope of work. To support this growth, we are building out strong yet responsive corporate functions that better support and guide our teams on the ground. We have already begun an overhaul of programme governance and human resources. We are also moving towards self-driven teams that collaborate smoothly to deliver on objectives, while supporting them to respond to emergent needs.

Aiming for impact: strategy in an uncertain world (cont'd)

Siren's third goal is to disrupt the development paradigm to help our partners imagine and create new futures. We are investing in cutting edge research to drive programming, and developing a robust portfolio that can support exploratory initiatives. Rather than shaping ourselves to funding opportunities, we are working to build programmes where we can address unmet and emerging needs – as identified by our research and partnerships.

Finally, we aim to become the go-to organisation for security, justice and governance sector transformation. As an organisation that works hand-in-hand with public administrations and communities across many contexts, we are uniquely positioned to glean insights from the difficult, messy and critical task of transforming the public sector to better understand and meet the needs of communities. We are just beginning to collect and communicate our

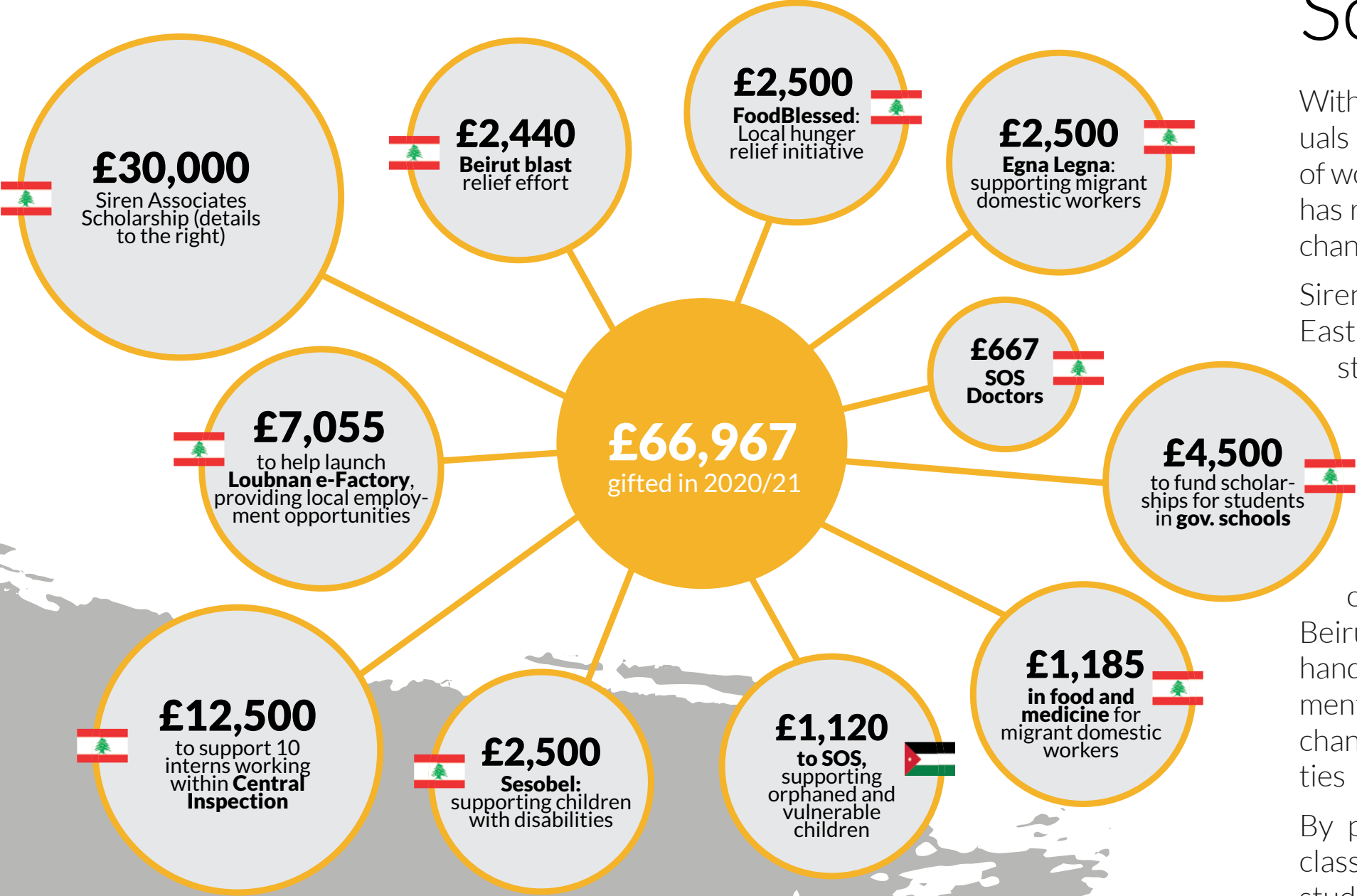
successes and lessons learned over the past years and are looking toward a future where we contribute to moulding global debate and setting the agenda in these sectors.

While we are excited about the progress we have already made, we are just at the start of our journey. Institutional transformation takes time and achieving our goals won't be easy. We will continue to hone our effectiveness in supporting Siren's partners to build safe, just and free societies.

We are investing in cutting edge research to drive programming, and developing a robust portfolio that can support exploratory initiatives.



Supporting society



Siren Associates Scholarship

With thousands of Lebanon’s brightest individuals being forced to leave the country in search of work due to the crippling financial collapse, it has rarely been more urgent to support future change makers in Lebanon.

Siren’s new scholarship at the University of East Anglia in the UK offers one Lebanese student each year the chance to pursue an MA in Conflict, Governance and International Development.

The scholarship covers the student’s annual tuition fees and maintenance costs, valued at £30,000. We’re also offering scholars a paid internship at our Beirut headquarters, where they will gain hands-on experience of designing and implementing projects that bring about positive change in the systems, processes and capabilities of Lebanon’s public sector institutions.

By providing financial support and a world class educational experience for Lebanese students, we hope they will stay in Lebanon to fight the public sector corruption, nepotism and mismanagement that pushed the country so far into crisis in 2020/21.

Upcoming Pledges



Interview with Sarah Zahreddine, recipient of Siren's Certificate of Excellence 2020/21



Sarah leads on our organisational development support to Lebanon's foremost oversight agency, Central Inspection, and was the recipient of Siren's Certificate of Excellence in 2020/21.

Working on our Governance, Oversight and Accountability in Lebanon (GOAL) project over a highly turbulent year, Sarah kept track of the project's progress across different work streams, proactively questioning ongoing processes, suggesting new ideas and raising red flags when things were heading off track.

Her emotional intelligence when interacting with the project's many and diverse external stakeholders was essential in keeping the project running smoothly, while opening avenues for honest dialogue when things weren't going to plan. Sarah's readiness to support colleagues when tasks were lagging, and general conscientiousness, helped to create a positive working atmosphere and build a strong and adaptive project team.

Sarah joined Siren as a Research and Project officer in August 2019 after earning her bachelor's degree in political and administrative sciences from Saint Joseph University.

What was your working highlight from the last year?

One of my most rewarding experiences was witnessing staff at the Ministry of the Displaced take-up and put into action the new digital tools that we created to help them map the social and economic situation in towns and villages across Lebanon. These tools were part of the rural and local development module that I helped set up on IMPACT in late 2020. As part of the module's roll-out, I delivered training sessions, followed by daily on-the-job mentoring to Ministry staff. Over two months, I witnessed their dedication and diligent monitoring of the platform's use. It was rewarding to find that we, the Siren team, ended up having to move faster in order to keep up with them.

What was the most satisfying moment?

Witnessing the birth and growth of IMPACT since March 2020. We started off as just three people supporting and following up with around 1,000 municipalities and mukhtars, and

Interview with Sarah Zahreddine, recipient of Siren's Certificate of Excellence 2020/21 (cont'd)

quickly found we needed to introduce and outsource a call centre, as well as expand the team. IMPACT's growth from one crisis to another is a story of agility and adaptability, but I also find that it represents the Chinese word for "crisis", which includes at the same time elements of "danger" and "opportunity."

What achievement are you most proud of?

Collaborating with Central Inspection's Health, Social and Agriculture Inspectorate to develop an audit plan for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Lebanon. Since launching the plan, the inspectorate has been monitoring the vaccination process on a daily basis, with weekly reports published. Not only is the monitoring and reporting standardised and almost institutionalised within the inspectorate, but the

reports also gained credibility and growing attention, both from national and international stakeholders, and the public.

What was the biggest challenge?

With the national lockdown imposed in mid-March 2020, and GOAL responding to the crisis through IMPACT, it was hard for me to maintain a work-life balance as boundaries between work and personal spaces faded. The launch of IMPACT was accompanied by working long hours, seven days a week for more than one month. It also came as I was just starting my second semester at university. And with IMPACT expanding, the double challenge was to keep up with the growing number of emergencies stemming from the compounding crises in Lebanon. This is perfectly illustrated

by our rapid preparation of IMPACT's module to assess damage to public buildings after the Beirut blast. Having to navigate the volatile and uncertain situation in Lebanon requires additional mental, physical and psychological efforts, which was at some points overwhelming. I was happy to see that, despite the challenges, my work was appreciated and rewarded with the certificate of excellence I was granted.

With IMPACT expanding, the challenge was to keep up with growing emergencies in the context of Lebanon's compounded crises.

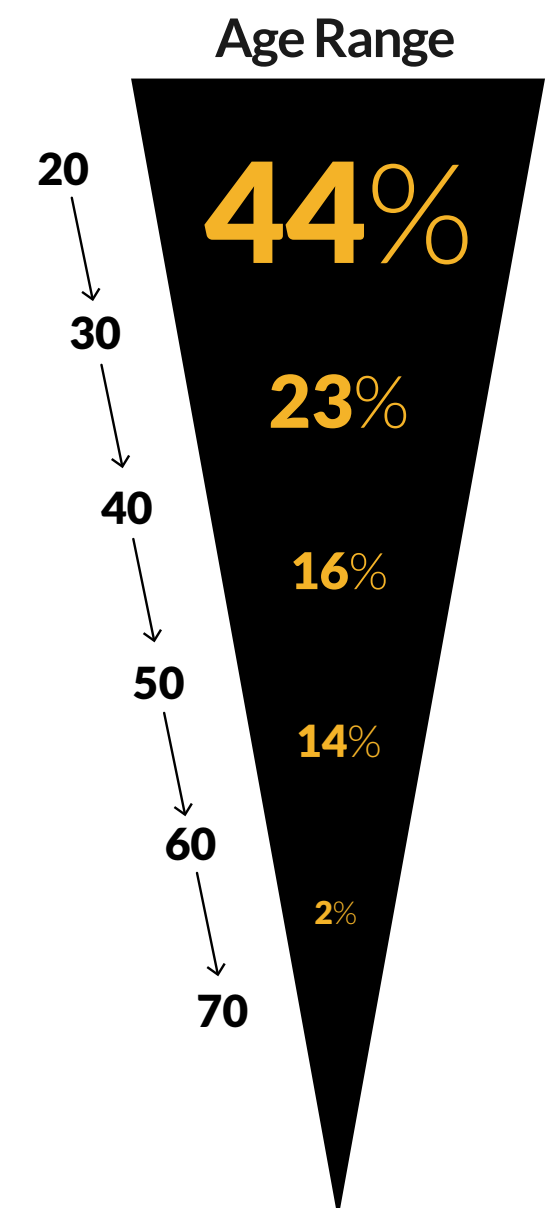
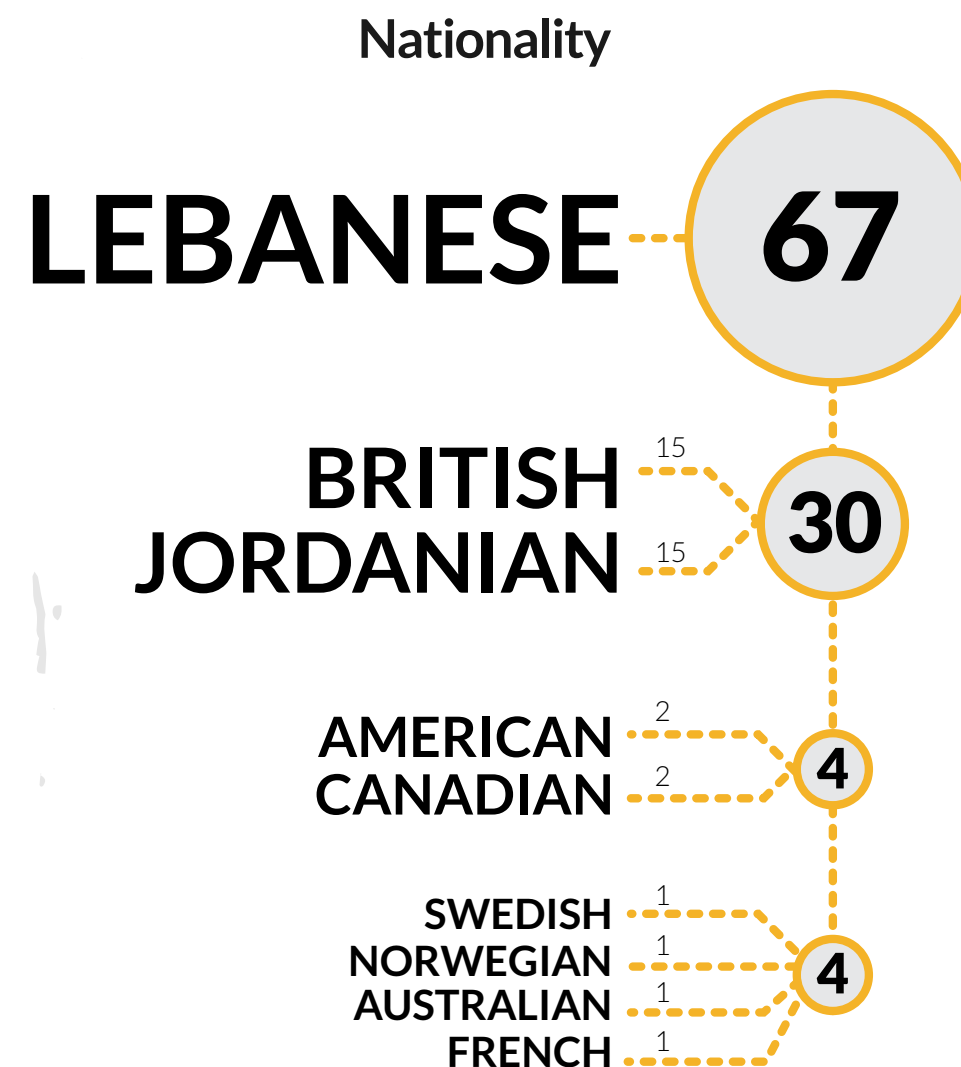
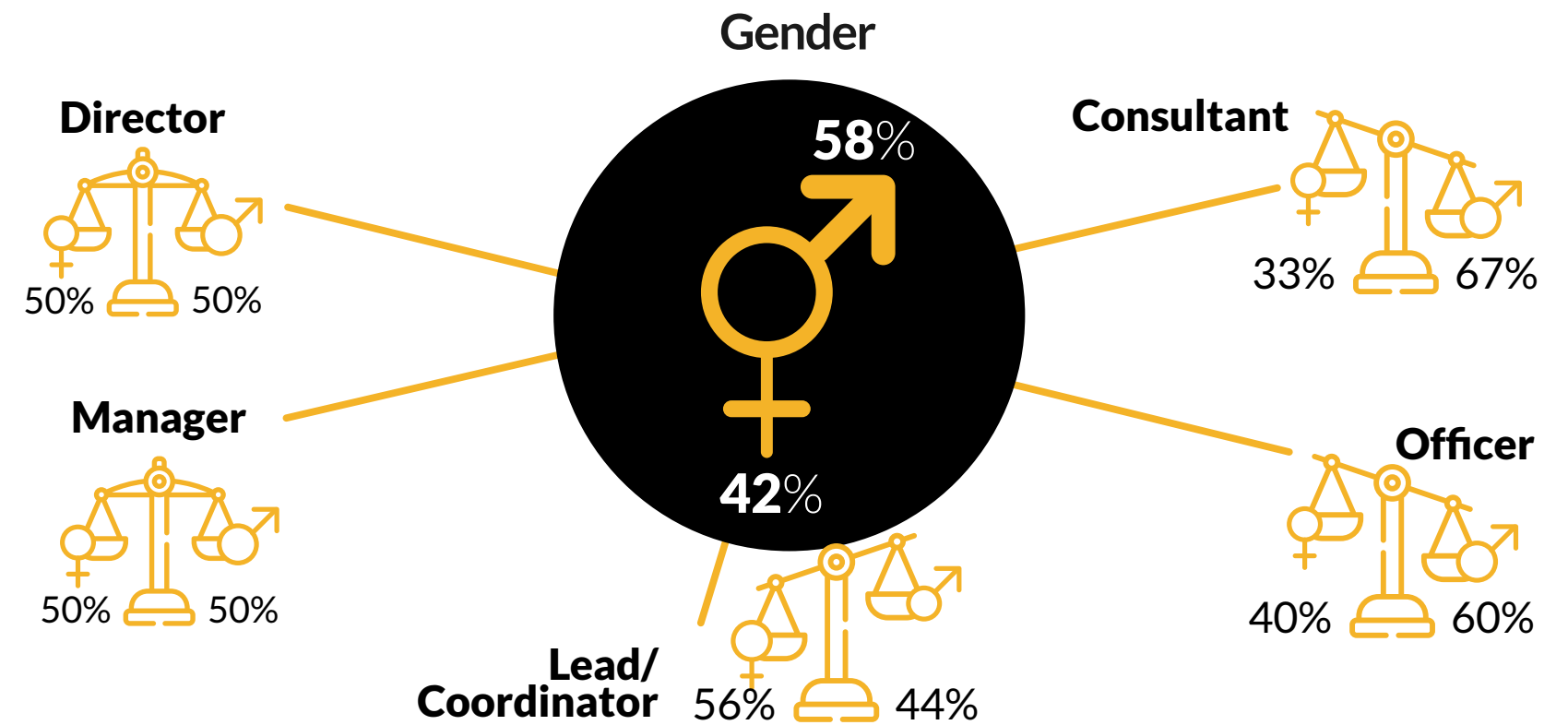


Siren staff in figures

Siren prides itself on nurturing an inclusive workplace that is open to diversity and difference among staff. We have recently incorporated a number of indicators to track our performance in this regard, and have implemented working policies that facilitate equal opportunities for all. These will be reviewed again in 2021.

We strive to have diverse teams of international and local staff. International consultants can provide technical skills and experience based on international good practice. National employees bring important knowledge about the local context, business environment, language skills and personal networks that help us to be successful in implementing projects and to achieve our organisational goals.

We offer flexible working hours and are always on the lookout to support the efforts staff make to improve their professional performance and to prepare for advancement. To this end, we offer to fund training opportunities for employees.





05

further reading and additional resources



Further reading and additional resources



Case study

May 2021

[Read case study here.](#)

Driving governance reform in times of uncertainty

A story of young Lebanese researchers, developers, engineers, lawyers, professors and communicators who invested their time, knowledge and passion to enable change in the midst of the storm hitting their country.



Survey

March 2021

[Read survey here.](#)

Public perceptions of community safety in Amman

Significant gender divides still exist in women's access to police and protection services in Amman. Simply increasing the availability of women police officers would contribute to a significant rise in in-person reporting, but work also needs to be done at the community level to normalise women's engagement with the police.



Survey

Feb 2021

[Read survey here.](#)

Perceptions and reception of Lebanon's COVID-19 vaccination plan

This survey showed a level of public uncertainty on whether the vaccine could lead to ending the pandemic, while also pointing to a knowledge gap on vaccine-related information. Respondents expressed some distrust in vaccines, mainly fearing its potential side effects. They wished for an inclusive approach on access to vaccines, prioritising certain categories of the population in the initial implementation phases. Yet, respondents also remained pessimistic and doubtful that the plan would be acted upon without the usual patterns of clientelism and corruption.



Survey

Jan 2021

[Read survey here.](#)

Public perceptions of the ongoing lockdown and its modalities in Lebanon

A rapid assessment of the public's experience so far when it comes to the total lockdown restrictions, the use of IMPACT's mobility request platform, and the interaction with the security forces while on the move. The platform was praised by respondents as an efficient, useful and user-friendly tool, which highlights the shift in perception, from initial sarcasm to a more positive and constructive debate about the potential offered by digital solutions in sustaining the lockdown. The mobility permits process appeared to have simplified the ISF's work and management on the ground. This was reflected by a high rating of their interaction with citizens at checkpoints and by the proper use of the permits to confirm mobility motives.

Further reading and additional resources



Report

Dec 2020

[Read report here.](#)

Public procurement in Lebanon - a gateway to malpractice

Lebanon's outdated and opaque public procurement system is a key enabler of corruption and waste. Radically reforming the laws, procedures and practices around procurement would empower state institutions to play the oversight and control roles that were originally envisaged for them.



Policy brief

Nov 2020

[Read policy brief here.](#)

National and local crisis response to COVID-19 in Lebanon

An assessment of the consecutive municipal lockdown decisions and their implications, proposing a way forward to improve the relevance, coherence, and efficiency of the response, focusing particularly on decentralisation and coordination with local authorities.



Report

Sep 2020

[Read report here.](#)

Concerns over the state of emergency in Lebanon

The process followed by the Lebanese government to declare a State of Emergency on 5 August 2020 was incompatible with the requirements of both national and international law, and some contents of the State of Emergency declaration violated Lebanon's obligations under international law. Moreover, the imposition of a State of Emergency was not effective as a method of ensuring law, order and security – ostensibly the purpose it was introduced for.



Policy brief

Nov 2020

[Read policy brief here.](#)

Aid distribution in Lebanon - an assessment

The Lebanese authorities' attempts to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, financial collapse and Beirut port blast presented serious shortcomings, causing hundreds of thousands of families in need to not benefit from any aid relief, further eroding what remains of confidence in state institutions. Clustering efforts should rally towards a more participatory approach with local authorities, civil society organisations and citizens, using platforms such as IMPACT as a shared, open, transparent and inclusive space that would help better guide state and non-state stakeholders in planning relief programs.



Report

Jun 2019

[Read report here.](#)

Mapping and understanding statelessness in Tripoli

There are around 27,000 stateless persons across Lebanon, of whom 2,200 are based in Tripoli. This number is expected to double in the next fifteen years. This study provides insights to help guide decision-making around four areas: mapping statelessness, reducing statelessness through the acquisition of nationality, preventing statelessness by addressing its causes, and helping stateless people to access their rights.

Projects and partners 20/21

Annual Report

Siren Associates © 2020 - 2021

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to our partners for their support over the financial year 2020/21, without which we would not have been able to implement the below listed projects:

Government of the United Kingdom

- **“Governance, Oversight and Accountability in Lebanon”** - supporting Central Inspection to efficiently carry out its functions, with the purpose of promoting good governance in Lebanon and improving the social contract between citizens and key state oversight institutions.
- **“British Policing Support Programme II”** - supporting Lebanon’s Internal Security Forces to become a more effective, responsive, and accountable policing service in order to build public trust and increase safety.

- **“Process automation for the reduction of stateless in Lebanon (phase 2)”** - introducing a new, digitised nationality registration system for stateless people that enhances inter-agency coordination and improves access for stateless individuals.

World Bank Group

- **“Review of public sector procurement in Lebanon”** - exploring the legal and political intricacies of public procurement, oversight mechanisms, and complaint systems in Lebanon in relation to procurement.

Kingdom of the Netherlands

- **“Shoulder to Shoulder”** - improving the delivery of community safety services to refugee and vulnerable host communities in Jordan.

Government of Canada

- **“Hasbani II”** - tactical first aid and first responder training for female Gendarmes in Jordan (implemented in consortium with Ark Group DMCC).

European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq³

- **“Expanding the protection space”** - community safety services for displacement-impacted communities.

UNHCR

- **“Mapping and understanding statelessness in Akkar”** - gathering clear data about the stateless population in north Lebanon, the factors behind their statelessness, their current challenges and their personal outlooks.

³RDPP II is a joint European initiative running until 2021. The Programme is supported by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland.